

# Mexico Makes Rapid Strides Reconstructing Railroads

Nearly 7,500 Freight Cars and 150 Locomotives Destroyed in Revolutions; Roadbeds in Fine Shape U. S. Observers Impressed

Interesting Object Lesson of Amount of Abuse a System Will Successfully Stand

By John F. Barry

IN 1913 there were 18,492 freight cars and 653 passenger coaches in Mexico. In 1920 there were only 11,058 freight cars and 380 passenger coaches available for use on the railroads of that country. The remainder had been swallowed up by the revolutionary Moloch.

To emphasize still further the serious condition of the railroads of Mexico and the urgent demand for new equipment, it must be borne in mind that of the rolling stock technically "serviceable" a large proportion is merely "patched up and tied together with a shoestring," as an American railroad man expressed it.

American railroad men who have recently visited Mexico speak in terms of admiration of two things: The condition of the roadbeds of many of the lines, which are in extraordinarily good condition considering that little has been done on them in ten years; and they have nothing but respect for the Mexican engineers who will take engines on long runs that no self-respecting American engineer would dare take out of the roundhouse.

Mexico today presents an interesting object lesson of the amount of abuse a railroad system will stand and still function. Howard T. Oliver, president of the Oliver American Trading Company, the leading operator of "private trains"—of which more anon—is at present in New York negotiating for the purchase of a large number of new locomotives for use in Mexico, says: "The railroads of Mexico are to-day operating at less than 50 per cent efficiency—probably 25 per cent would be nearer the mark—but when we consider the condition in which the roads were left by the Carranza administration, this represents a quite remarkable achievement on the part of the officials who took charge of the roads since last June."

Immediate Requirements In July, 1920, Acting President de la Huerta appointed Jaime Gurza, a well known cotton planter of the Tabasco district and one of the best known financiers and business men in Mexico, to make a thorough study of the actual condition of the railroads of Mexico. Gurza submitted his report to Francisco Perez, the present director general of the National Railways, in November, 1920. The figures quoted at the beginning of this article are taken from the Gurza report; it has not yet been published in the United States, to the best of my knowledge.

"The immediate traffic needs of the republic," according to Señor Gurza, "call for at least 480 additional locomotives and 5,000 freight cars. The securing of the material for these roads will mean an increase in revenue for the National Railways of at least 1,500,000 pesos (about \$750,000) a month, out of which the railroads will be able to reconstruct 2,500 cars. Between June and November, 1920," he says, "orders amounting to 5,945 163 pesos were placed in the United States for repair parts of all kinds. When this material is received it will be possible to reconstruct 2,500 cars. The cars will be ready for service by July, 1921, the shops delivering approximately 300 cars a month, beginning with January, 1921. It will also be possible to reconstruct 2,500 new locomotives in the same period, deliveries being made at the rate of forty or fifty a month, beginning with January."

External Needs Cared For The 5,000 cars and 480 locomotives which Gurza contemplates as the immediate requirement are for the internal traffic of the republic. He considers that the agreement with the American Railway Association for the free passage of cars into the country will take care of the external traffic needs of the country. Since the report was issued the agreement with the association has been completed and the American cars loaded with merchandise have crossed the border. But other thousands of cars have been steadily accumulating at El Paso and other border points, and cannot be moved into Mexico because of lack of locomotives. The yards and tracks of the American railroads at the border are in a state of dangerous congestion as a consequence.

To relieve this condition Francisco Perez came to the United States and made an arrangement with some of the Southern American railroads for the loan of forty locomotives to Mexico. Nineteen of these are now at the port of Brownsville, twelve are at the frontier port of Laredo, two to cross to the Mexican side, and nine others have already crossed the border. The agreement stipulates that none of these locomotives shall be operated south of the city of Monterey and all are subject to return on short notice.

It is, therefore, to be feared that this means only a temporary relief at best, and may merely mean the shifting of the point of congestion to the Monterey yards and other points south of the border.

Relief From Private Service

In a further effort to relieve the congestion—where the "Tambo de Vera Cruz" as it is at the United States border—the Director General of the National Railways has given a contract to the Oliver American Trading Company whereby one hundred locomotives will be brought into Mexico, to be operated by this company in connection with its own "private train" service. Four of these locomotives have already crossed the border, according to Mr. Oliver, and more will follow at an early date.

The American Locomotive Company is at present negotiating with the Mexican government for the sale of about \$2,000,000 and \$3,000,000 worth of equipment. The sale hinges on the making of satisfactory financial arrangements. Charles E. Muehlich, vice-president of the American Locomotive Sales Corporation, said yesterday: "American manufacturers are ready and willing to do business with the

## Abnormally High Raw Silk Prices Not Wanted, Say Japanese Producers

Abnormally high prices for raw silk are not desired by Japanese producers, according to Saburobei Endo, chairman of the Japanese raw silk mission to the recent International Silk Show. He expressed this view at a dinner given by the mission to its American friends before sailing for home.

"True trade," he said, "gives pleasure to those who buy and those who sell, and thus benefits the public. This is applicable to-day to all of us, you silk men and we raw silk men, as well as exporters, cocoon producers and consumers. In order to obtain this common goal, all must strive to make the cost of production the foundation of prices and be satisfied with reasonable gains, thus eliminating the element of speculation. This is our hope and goal, and yours as well. An abnormally high price of silk would disturb the market, and in the same way an unusually low price would diminish the cocoon product and degrade also the quality of raw silk, making it impossible for us to produce raw material that can stand the strain of high-speed American looms."

"In New York, among many things which have caught our attention is the wonderful way in which your traffic police control the congested traffic with amazing ease. Now, our raw silk syndicate is this traffic police. As traffic police are necessary only on unusually crowded streets, so our syndicate owes its existence to this extraordinary period of stress, and without it a panic would result."

"Thus, our syndicate is an emergency organ to stabilize the market, and after it has accomplished its object it will be dissolved. But, on the other hand, if conditions become worse more stringent methods might be needed."

The Japanese government and these silk men are in a difficult position in arranging suitable terms of payment. They are willing to sell Mexico all the locomotives she needs. We have been willing to do so since last summer, and have been waiting for the Japanese government to take action. The Japanese government may find that we are dealing directly with government officials and not through any intermediaries whatsoever."

Operation by Private Firms

An interesting development in the Mexican railroad situation during the dark days of the Carranza regime, when practically all the rolling stock was in the hands of the military authorities or in possession of the revolutionaries, and none was available for the commercial needs of the republic, was the making of contracts with private firms for the operation of trains on the tracks of the National Railways. At the close of the Carranza regime practically all the foreign traffic of Mexico was carried in these private trains. The Oliver American Trading Company was one of the firms which took over the operation of the movement, beginning with two locomotives and about twenty freight cars, which later were increased to fourteen locomotives and about twenty freight cars. The operation of these private trains was run from the United States border to Mexico City, and all merchandise was carried at express rates. The operation of these private trains business in Mexico City and other

cities of the republic would have been analyzed. Merchants were also permitted by the government to operate cars for their own use, and these cars became the property of the firm making the repairs for periods of time varying from a few days to a month of money expended. The Gurza report gives the number of these privately owned and operated cars and locomotives in September, 1920, as seventy-one locomotives and 3,454 freight cars.

Earnings Show Increase

It is an interesting fact that the earnings of the National Railways at present are greater than they were before the revolution. The lines were not under government control. The reason for this apparent paradox is that practically all goods shipped in Mexico today are sent by express, at express rates. The gross earnings of the National Railways in December last were nearly 11,000,000 pesos. The figures for January will prove to be much higher, as an increase in rates went into effect at the beginning of the month.

The Mexican government is making strenuous efforts to get the National Railways back into good condition. They have been seriously hampered by the lack of rolling stock and the down condition of the old. Considering the difficulties to be overcome, including the important one of lack of money, the strides already made have been most praiseworthy.

Labor Stability Quebec's Boon

Manufacturers Take Advantage of Native Desire to Remain Near Home; All Costs More Uniform

Special Dispatch to The Tribune

TORONTO, Feb. 19.—In periods of slackness in manufacturing, some of the local manufacturers in Quebec enjoy advantages which are not shared by establishments in English-speaking Canada. Employment in Quebec generally is more stable and industrial activities more uniform and steady than in probably any other part of the North American continent. This situation is due in large measure to the character of the French Canadian labor and also to the partial isolation of the province by reason of language and other factors. As Hon. Walter Mitchell, Provincial Treasurer, stated in his annual budget report, which has just been issued, labor conditions are better in Quebec than in any other part of the Dominion. The Minister added that there was a "less radicalism, less Socialism, no Bolshevism, more contentment, more satisfaction, and as a result a better relationship between employer and employee."

Such statements are more than ordinary political head-patting. Even in the case of the Southern States, where the English-speaking industrial workers. The comparatively plentiful supply of female help in the lower provinces has been a factor in the development of the English-speaking industries in Quebec. The comparatively plentiful supply of female help in the lower provinces has been a factor in the development of the English-speaking industries in Quebec. The comparatively plentiful supply of female help in the lower provinces has been a factor in the development of the English-speaking industries in Quebec.

Double Form of Protection Besides their advantages in respect of labor, local manufacturing industries in Quebec, which find their principal markets within the province in reality, have been enjoying a double form of protection against outside competition. In addition to the customs tariff they have all the advantages which come from the fact that they are in a state of protection against outside competition. In addition to the customs tariff they have all the advantages which come from the fact that they are in a state of protection against outside competition.

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## Nirvive Ideas Used in Trade As Stimulants

Shoe Industry Showing Resourcefulness in Stirring Up New Business to Relieve the Depression

Nursery Setting in Store

Manufacturers Turn to the Movies and Making By-products From Scraps

ROMANCE is coming back to business. The period of inflated prices and easy profits took much of the romance out of business. Deflation, liquidation and a return to active competition are bringing out here and there the strange developments resulting from keen business thinking along constructive lines. New policies, new methods, new ideas all around are creeping into business. Some of them will be found successful and probably will become commonplace in a few years. Others will fail and will be discarded, but the average business man is now more than ready to give a fair trial to any new ideas calculated to increase his sales or his profits.

The shoe trade is showing great mental resourcefulness in wriggling out of the tight hole in which it found itself precipitated last year. Hundreds of new ideas have been sprung up in that trade in the past few months.

Three of the most important so far developed in this locality are a nursery for children, a motion picture progressive retailer, a motion picture sales propaganda instituted by a manufacturer and the manufacture of belts from shoe scraps by another footwear producer.

Nursery Shoe Shop

The Nursery Shoe Shop is part of a footwear retail establishment recently opened on Fifth Avenue. The shop is in the basement of the store and is a complete nursery in itself. The idea in mind that the most important part in selling and fitting infants' and children's shoes is the satisfaction of the parents. The shop is fitted up as a complete nursery in every respect. Little swings have been provided for the amusement of the kiddies, and later a sandbox and a set of picture books will be added. The entire first room is composed of fairly tall illustrations in color and the stock cases are separated by large wooden panels decorated with brilliant red, blue and yellow so pleasing to children's eyes.

Other features for the amusement of the child are scattered about the room. When the child is tired of playing with new toys and becomes restless under the operation, it is permitted to get down from the fitting chair for a few minutes and to play with the toys. Thus what has ordinarily been a tedious process for the child, the mother and sales person, becomes more enjoyable.

Because of the high labor content of children's shoes they have shown more of a proportionate price increase than footwear for grown-ups. Prices ranging from \$5 to \$10 for children's shoes have become commonplace, even with the reductions that have been made in the last few months. A certain amount of inflation is shown in children's shoes, but the parents must be overcome in their resistance to this new method of selling in order to accomplish the result desired.

Movies Also Help

Clever resourcefulness in turning the movies into a selling proposition was shown by a certain Brooklyn manufacturer of high grade, highly styled shoes for women. He had a good idea of the value of the motion picture convention of retailers and style show held in Milwaukee. One of the moving picture companies took several feet of film and had a selling proposition made at the show. This manufacturer obtained for his purpose a large number of high grade, highly styled shoes for women. He had a good idea of the value of the motion picture convention of retailers and style show held in Milwaukee. One of the moving picture companies took several feet of film and had a selling proposition made at the show. This manufacturer obtained for his purpose a large number of high grade, highly styled shoes for women. He had a good idea of the value of the motion picture convention of retailers and style show held in Milwaukee.

Reclamation of Scraps

A manufacturer of men's shoes started a reclamation department about a year ago, through which every scrap of material left over from the factory was salvaged. Up until a short time ago this was sold, thus reducing slightly the operating costs of the factory.

With the necessity forced by present conditions of reducing production costs as much as possible, the shoe man thought that this scrap, or a part of it, might be converted into a by-product of his own factory. The revenue thus derived, further applied to the cost of operation. He invented an interlacing leather shoe, and from the scraps of upper leather and from the scraps of lower leather, he made a shoe. The organization invented a machine to do the interlacing. The belt is now being offered on the market and claims the distinction of being the only genuine calf skin belt that can be retailed with profit by the merchant at less than \$1.00.

After paying the additional costs involved in making the belt, the manufacturer figures that his scrap will pay him almost three times as much through this process as it did when he sold it in bulk to scrap leather dealers.

Planning for Convention

International Garment Producers to Meet in May

Plans for the twenty-fourth annual convention of the International Garment Producers Association, to be held at the Hotel Winton, Cleveland, from May 1 to 5, are being drafted, according to an announcement yesterday by Secretary A. F. Allison. Coincidental with the convention will be the annual textile and machinery exposition, which will include eighty-five manufacturers of piece goods, garment working machinery, office appliances, dyestuffs, but none of these items are to be exhibited in the garment trades will participate.

Considerable importance is attached to the reports to be rendered by the committees on commercial arbitration, cancellations, tariff and trade matters, appointed by President Mack of the Rauh & Mack Shirt Company, Cincinnati, following the semi-annual convention which will be held in January. The convention also will include a meeting of factory production managers, at which the association's bureau of factory practice and industrial relations will develop some ideas for economies in production, increased efficiency and waste elimination.

The future operations of the newly created regional cost councils, instituted to standardize cost accounting in the industry, also will be decided upon.

## Spinners' Prosperity Tied to That of Cotton Growers

Consumers of Raw Material Realize Difficulties of Farmers and Favor Relief Measures; Against Confiscatory Price, Says Whittam

By William Whittam  
Former Special Agent of the Department of Commerce

In this connection of the American cotton situation one whose interests are bound up with the prosperity of the industry from fiber to fabric may be permitted to say that the cotton spinner's position is a very delicate one. The cotton farmer to turn out his main weed crop—the professional politician. It is useless to carry that unnecessary weight in the industrial balance. As Schiller says, "Yoked with stupidity the gods themselves fight in vain."

Back in 1915, when the "crisis" in the cotton industry was at its height, the State Warehouse Commissioner of South Carolina said: "Creating useless judicial districts for the replenishment of the pie, the cotton spinner is a very delicate one. The cotton farmer to turn out his main weed crop—the professional politician. It is useless to carry that unnecessary weight in the industrial balance. As Schiller says, "Yoked with stupidity the gods themselves fight in vain."

There are two main elements in the cotton situation. One is the cotton farmer, who is the source of the raw material. The other is the cotton spinner, who is the consumer of the raw material. The cotton farmer is the one who is in a position to realize the difficulties of the cotton spinner. The cotton spinner is the one who is in a position to realize the difficulties of the cotton farmer.

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## Reviviscient Germany Bidding for Orders

Advertising columns of newspapers in western Sweden show unmistakable signs of a reviviscient Germany. The leading paper of Götterburg carries two pages of German manufacturers' advertising daily, causing not a little uneasiness in Swedish manufacturing circles—and a growing demand for a protective tariff.

Prospective competition with German houses will doubtless be felt by American and British exporters, who have dominated this market for the last few years.

Conditions of the German railroads appear especially favorable, as it requires only ten or twelve days for delivery of freight in all parts of Sweden from Germany. The improvement in traffic conditions in the central European countries recently has been considered remarkable.

Trade Revival Is Retarded by Large Stocks

Amount of Manufactured Merchandise Still Being Held Off Market Tends to Check Production

One of the most effective brakes on a revival of business to the proportions of a boom is the great stock of goods that is tied up in one way or another, manufactured for specific purposes and impossible of conversion into other channels. It is reported that great stocks of tire fabrics are held in the warehouses of the tire companies or in mill warehouses. The amount of money tied up in these goods, either by tire manufacturers or the cotton mills, who have not been able to dispose of them, is enormous and in capable of accurate calculation.

Then there is the great amount of leather stock made up for the automobile trade, and the leather stock in storage awaiting a revival of the automotive trade. One of the large leather companies is said to have about \$2,000,000 worth of side leathers and other varieties of leather stock. It is expected that some time will elapse before these stocks are reduced to a point where they can be sold at anything approaching a normal sale.

A large quantity of silk goods in the gray or unfinished state is reposing in the warehouses of the silk mills. It is said, awaiting removal by importers, who find that the freight and duty charges are more than the goods are worth on the present market. Some silk companies estimate that fully 2,000,000 pounds of such goods, worth at least \$5 a pound, are thus held.

On the other hand, dealers in dry goods are experiencing difficulty in getting some of the merchandise that is wanted for immediate sale in response to consistent consumer demand. The situation is a bit of a paradox. It is simple repetition, this placing legislative obstacles in the way of the revival of business. The "inflation" bill and other legislation in such infinite variety that American capital sought foreign outlet. Low prices brought on the free sale of goods, and the result was a resounding Nebraska silver tongue. And more recently, when war with Germany was declared, Southern Senators tried to pick the National pocket for \$25,000,000. The result was the proceeds from which were to be invested in cotton, to be held until the fiber reached 10 cents a pound. It was absolutely necessary to save the South, and the result was not come off, yet the South still lives.

There are many who do not favor the exemption of cooperative associations from the operation of the anti-trust law. The attempts by the Attorney General to enforce its provisions against them have been futile. About the only reason for the exemption is the fact that the privilege was that it had already been granted to exporters. Price fixing has been another fact of the cotton situation for many years. What is the result? The cotton situation is a bit of a paradox. It is simple repetition, this placing legislative obstacles in the way of the revival of business. The "inflation" bill and other legislation in such infinite variety that American capital sought foreign outlet. Low prices brought on the free sale of goods, and the result was a resounding Nebraska silver tongue. And more recently, when war with Germany was declared, Southern Senators tried to pick the National pocket for \$25,000,000. The result was the proceeds from which were to be invested in cotton, to be held until the fiber reached 10 cents a pound. It was absolutely necessary to save the South, and the result was not come off, yet the South still lives.

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